

Communities' Cultural Capital for Sustainable Community Tourism Development: A Case Study of Charoen Krung Road

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Abstract

This research aims to study the knowledge factors and sustainable community tourism development in the area along the Chao Phraya River from Charoen Krung Road to Yaowarat Road, the charming old district and a multicultural society in Bangkok, Thailand. Primary data were collected from interviews of stakeholders or the people in the community in depth and within real-life context in a qualitative manner. The findings suggested that Thai, Thai Chinese, Thai-Muslim, and Vietnamese people are able to live together, relying on the social capital on two types of identities: 1) The multiculturalism society identity; and 2) The Chinese identity that has five similar dialect languages, such as the Hokkien or Fujian, the Chaozhou, the Cantonese, the Hakka and the Hainan. They have grouped together, built their trust among the community members through cultural and traditional activities of the community. That is until it becomes an important concept to create a multicultural social mechanism through religious systems such as temples, shrines, and mosques to manage the members of the heritage community. Furthermore, they can create strong mechanisms of a multicultural society and will be able to develop into sustainable tourism. The results of the research contribute to a role of the ownership in management in order to provide learning to the tourists visiting the community and indicate an issue of retaining tradition from modernization with its seemingly inevitable erosion of traditional societies.

Keywords: Multiculturalism Identity, The Strengthen Community, Social Capital, The East Bank of Bangkok

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Introduction

Charoen Krung Road with modern construction method is the first main road in Bangkok, Thailand built during 1862-1864 in the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV). Charoen Krung Road covers the area, starting from the old city centre in Rattanakosin Island, through Bangkok's Chinatown to the end in Bang Kho Laem district. Bangkok's old town is known as "Rattakosin Island" located in the east bank of Bangkok along in the Chao Phraya River bank in a heritage district of Bangkok. Presently, this district has become the historical and architectural heritage. A common misperception about Charoen Krung is its Thai meaning which is typically perceived as "New Road". At that time all the streets or roads were officially unnamed. This new thoroughfare was first called "Tha-non-mai" or "New Road" by Thais. Later King Mongkut named it as "Charoen Krung" which means prosperous city. Charoen Krung was behind embassies, warehouses, and residences in two paralleling sides of Chao Phraya River. During this time the start of foreign ideas and modernization have been introduced to the country and the Thailand government is interested to westernize the country as a counterbalance to regional foreign encroachments in China, Vietnamese settlers and Burmese. This connects the Chinese community of "Sampeng" or "Yaowarat" with little India community of "Phahurat" and western community in "Bang Rak area". In August 1861, Western consuls complained about a lack of roads in which they could transit sick people with horse-drawn carriage. They requested the King to construct a new road on the east side of the river behind consulates and business areas. The King Rama IV agreed with the request of the construction of new roads. The first road, which would serve the European district, was begun in 1862 and officially opened to traffic in March 1864. Charoen Krung Road was one of the major development in the city which transformed from the river of life to the road of the Europeans' life.

Rationale and Context

Community is important key for sustainable tourism development that could be controlled by local people. That is to say, tourists visit, spend time and leave places in a short period of time but local people permanently live in them. Because of that, local people are more aware of the importance of conserving cultural treasures than tourists.

Sustainable tourism is a steady growing phenomenon in global tourism industry. The migration of multiracial and multi-religious citizen such as Chinese, Burmese, Javanese, and Laotian, has established an interesting mixed culture. Charoen Krung Road represents "multicultural" community with diverse ethnic groups, languages, cultures that show differences in the way of life. However, people on the road live peacefully together in a form of multiculturalism.

Purpose of the Study

1. To study the cultural costs of the community for the development of sustainable tourism by the community, a case study of Chao Phraya River in the east of Bangkok, in Charoen Krung area.
2. To study a sustainable community-based tourism route in the area of Chao Phraya River in the east of Bangkok on Charoen Krung Road.

Scope of Study Area

1. Research Setting

The community area is along Chao Phraya River in the east of Bangkok. The research site covers the area from Wat Ratchasingkorn on Charoen Krung Road, Talad Noi Soi Wanit 1 and 2 of Sampeng, Yaowarat Road, Songwat Road, and Ratchawong Pier. The present study explores information of temples, Chinese shrines, mosques, houses and old shops that tell stories in the community.

2. Scope of the Study

This research focuses on a study of body of knowledge, way of life, traditions, and society concerning the old community area. A variety of places on Charoen Krung Road includes historic religious sites, temples, Chinese shrines, mosques, old houses and shops that tell stories in the local community as well as food markets and local products that are unique to the community area.

Data Collection

Primary Source of Data

- 1) **Observation Inventory:** This method requires physical survey of Thai- Chinese community and Thai people of various descent with a mixture of Thai-Chinese-Christian and Muslim cultures that are unique identities in the Thai society. In this particular study, a survey on the old community was conducted to understand the way of life in the community and tourists' behaviours.
- 2) **Questionnaire:** Both demographic data and opinions in the questionnaire are used to observe attitudes towards the community.
- 3) **In-depth Interview:** Sessions were conducted to talk with tourists and owners of the old ancient mission house. The interviewees, for example, include "So Heng Tai", the owner of a vintage pastry shop, the owner of hand-made pillow shop, "Heng Seng" in Talad Noi market community who is in charge of Sampeng or Yaowarat, Chinese shrine attendant, a mosque attendant, a church attendant, a coffee shop owner, coffee shop customers, and board game shop.

Secondary Source of Data

Secondary data basically comprises information from books, articles, journals that are relevant to the context of the study.

Outline of the Study

Charoen Krung Road has a story of life in terms of art and culture, the ways of the community in the area. This eight-kilometre road is interesting place where many people are familiar provokes the idea of happiness. There are different hidden stories with charm of viewing people, multicultural that reflects the coexistence of the intercultural community harmoniously through architecture, lifestyle in Bangkok city. Apart from creating a tourism dimension that could attract tourists, a collection and transmission of time dimension of Charoen Krung Road is also worthy for future generations to study and learn about the Thailand historic place.

Literature Review

A peaceful coexistence in multicultural society with shared cultural skills on Charoen Krung Road consists of people who have different languages, religions, ways of life, ethnic consciousness. However, an understanding of different lifestyles bridges a gap of differences between people so that people live as “brothers and relatives in the community”.

Local economic community-based sustainable tourism as guided and managed by the community takes sustainability of the environment which includes society and culture into account. Thus, the community has an ownership and the right to administer and create learning for the visitors.

When Chao Phraya River is liked the artery, Charoen Krung Road is considered a vein that is parallel to the artery. The 150-year story of Charoen Krung Road is a reflection of the prosperity of Thailand. The two sides of Charoen Krung Road are lined with ancient, historic, and religious sites and full of friendship among people with different nationalities residing in Thailand. Business and trade run by Chinese people and foreign visitors contribute Charoen Krung Road to be a very important district of Bangkok. Charoen Krung is the first road of Siam accommodating the new economic zone, the new way of trade in the colonial era that Siam signed in the Burney Treaty and the Bowring Treaty with Great Britain.

In the early Rattanakosin period, most of trading was done with China. There was also Javanese. In the reign of King RAMA I, Thailand dealt junk trade of royal and private coffin with Malay and Indian that is important and generates a lot of income for the country. This junk ship was made by quality wood in Siam and featured in Chinese style by Chinese crews. However, the Thai people were in charge of the Navy or the warehouse were the guards during the construction in Thailand. Major exports were tin, ivory, wood, sugar, pepper, bird's nest, animal bones, animal skin, cardamom and shellac while major imports were chinaware, stoneware, silver, silk, tea and paper. Until the reign of King Rama IV, Siam had more trading contacts with Western nations that increased international diplomatic ties.

Sir. John Bowring, appointed ambassador Queen Victoria of Great Britain in order to developed relations with the royal court and negotiated a treaty with the Royal Court of Thailand in the year of 1854 during the reign of King Mongkut. Finally, Bowring treaty was signed on 18th April. In the same year, the treaty resulted in the loss of Siamese sovereignty and extraterritorial rights, but saved Siam from colonization. Later, the Bowring treaty signed in 1855 and became the model for 14 other countries to enter into the same treaty. That facilitated Thailand to cancel Inequality Treaty, which was completed in 1938. In the reign of King Rama V, the culture of living nightlife outside homes like Western life was new to Siamese society. An interesting aspect is that the culture was related to the modern pace of the country. Anna Leonowens postulated that the Siamese usually preferred to sleep during the day like vacation. That was different from the culture of a western walk. A little more special night activity was a temple fair which provided an opportunity for everyone to enjoy entertainment outside their homes.

There was influenced by other countries to adopt a tenement on the road. For example, a model of civilization in the city of Singapore was implemented. Lantern from shop house was initially used with an oil lamp, then switched to gas lights in the year of 1881 and that was the first Siam Electric Company. The street lights therefore shifted to electric system instead. Since then electric lighting made the road beautiful and safer for people to walk at night.

In the reign of King Rama VI, Thailand had more contacts with foreigners in Europe and America. An expansion of the metropolitan Bangkok started in Si Phraya area until the road falls including the areas of Silom, Bangrak, and Sathorn Road. The commercial area expanded on both sides of Thanon Tok. Also, industrial areas expanded along the banks of the Chao Phraya River. This area was called the western area (European section). Bangrak district was like home and commercial operation for the westerner. As a result, this district showed a better progressive growth in the past than other communities in that period.

The House Number One or Captain Bush Alley was next to Si Phraya Pier. The name of the alley came originally from the name of the English Captain John Bush, who previously resided in the area. Captain Bush took over the government service of the foundation in Harbour Department since the reign of King Rama IV. This captain was also an executive and a major shareholder of Bangkok Dock which is now the shipyard on Chao Phraya River.

In addition, Charoen Krung Road during World War II became a Japanese society in Thailand for a time that paid attention to identity. It was unique to be the centre of modern trade prosperity. An interesting fact in the 17th century was that more Japanese products were sold in food categories in Thailand such as soy sauce, dried fish, and seaweed whereas Siam sold rice to Okinawa.

There had been more Japanese people living in Thailand. The cultural dimension of food has changed. Culture of eating food could tell life stories. Changing the way of society from eating food on town's waterfront to commercial buildings on both sides of roads. Food in different cultures is not just for the purpose of survival. In contrast, food was defined with diverse meanings and social implications. For instance, warm white rice porridge was cooked and normally eaten as breakfast in the morning in a Thai-Chinese family. The meaning was different from rice porridge eaten with friends during the early hours until the night. Charoen Krung used to be a famous place called "Foodland" in Bangkok (Chanthavanich, 2020). Individuals who wanted to buy butter, jam, sausage, ham, bacon, western bread or wanted to buy spices, must go to Bang Rak. Other than that, Yaowarat and Phahurat were recommended for Chinese cooking and Indian food respectively. The information indicated the real state of Charoen Krung district where was full of attractive architecture and unique culture of historic places.

Discussion

Religious places with the beliefs of the community served as a fortress of the community camp. At any homes, a child will be born. The dead must come to the shrine, come to the church, come to the mosque, perform religious ceremonies. Nowadays, a place of religion is the centre that holds the minds of people in the community. Many places welcome people from outside the community. In addition, there are activities for welcoming small groups of tourists, as organized by government agencies and private sectors such as walking tours. These created an impact on the people in the same community because normally people in the Sampeng community, as before, had never been called as Chinese people, Thai guests, but used to call them "Sampeng people" while having known each other for 50 years or more.

Conclusion

The Concept of Sustainable Creative Indicator Development for Community-based Tourism

Directions of sustainable community tourism for community management in the community are emphasised to promote a role of ownership, the right of management for ensuring learning for visitors. It is a meaning in a community-based tourism management that relates to participation of villagers. The cooperation of people in the community, which is supportive host to promote conservation, includes a creation of consciousness and responsibility.

In the aspect of cultural resources, local intelligence for tourists is important for establishing perception and understanding of the way of life and cultures. People living in the area on Charoen Krung Road of 8.6 kilometres are diverse in light of religions; Thai Buddhist, Chinese, Islam, Catholic, and Christian. This difference is very interesting in terms of primary principles from different culture sources with community cultural capital for developing sustainable community tourism. This is essential to help bridging the social gap in four aspects: 1) Community management based on the real way 2) Community management for the benefits of life 3) Community management based on the truth, and 4) Community management based on peace of mind. The four aspects are considered as the key of community development for the people in the community.

Models of management communities' cultural capital for sustainable community tourism development in the case study of Charoen Krung Road consist of two models: 1) A model of welcoming tourists that aims to motivate local people to be aware and proud of being the part of the community that were clean and safe for tourists, and 2) A model of administration which supports development of tourist attractions for setting up culture and history learning centre.

Suggestion

The study found that Charoen Krung Road had a variety of cultural learning resources related to long history of a way of life. A multicultural diversity of people appeared in various places of worship, including Buddhist temples, Chinese shrines, Islam mosques, Catholic and Christian churches among others, and they were professional sources of wisdom. The community should be more educated about the needs of tourists and the management style of community tourism. In order for the community to understand the interests of tourists and their roles and responsibilities and for the youth to learn about diverse local cultures in Charoen Krung Road area, educational institutions should organize cultural learning activities in the community.

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